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A Brief Account of the Designs which the Papists have had against the Earl of Shaftsbury, occasioned by his commitment, July 2. 1681.

THo' the apprehending of the Right Honourable the Earl of *Shaftsbury* hath filled the Town and Countrey with talk and noise, yet it neither frightens nor discourageth any true *Protestant* or good *Englishman*: For as they have their innocency to support them under the troubles which the perjuries of needy and suborned Villains may bring upon them, so they noways doubt but to unravel all this *Sham-Intrigue*, and trace it through all its steps and windings to the fountain and original of it. And as this honourable person is more loyal than to conspire against the Life of the King, or the Peace of the Government; so were he a person traiterously inclined, yet he is wiser than to communicate a design of levying War for the deposing or destroying his Prince, to such base and mercenary Rascals as are said to have witnessed against him. For his folly would have equal'd his wickedness, should he, under a pretence of preserving the Protestant Religion and Interest, have entered into so hazardous and black a conspiracy, not only with beggerly Fellows, but with *Irish* men and *Papists*. And tho' no man can think himself safe should the Testimony of such Varlets be allowed, who will, for money, swear any thing they are prompted unto; yet there is not so much as one person that will either abscond or withdraw: But all do rather under the satisfaction and comfort which they have in their own innocency, chuse to perish by the malignity of false Tongues, than derive an aspersion upon their integrity, either through flight, or the concealment of themselves for a season. And for this honourable Gentleman that is first singled out for the Papists to glut and exemplifie their malice and rage upon, the whole tenor and universal conduct of his life have spoken him, not only a person of the greatest abilities and wisdom, but of the highest loyalty to His Majesty, and warmest zeal for his service, that any these Three Kingdoms have produced in this Age. Nor is there a Nobleman or Gentleman within the King's Dominions, to whose influence His Majesty doth more owe his peaceable and happy Restoration, and the succesful administration of His affairs for many years together, than to this wise and noble Peer. And as the King can never forget the many great and memorable services which this Gentleman did him, when few had either courage, loyalty or prudence to render them useful to his interest; so whensoever His Majesty comes impartially to examine the Counsels and Transactions for which he hath of late years undergone so much obloquie, and stood exposed to so many personal dangers and hazards, he will find them all directly calculated for, and lying in a direct subserviency to the preservation of His Person, Crown and Dignity, and the promoting the glory of His Reign.

Nor can it be supposed that one possessing that room in the favour and esteem of His Prince, which my Lord *Shaftsbury* did, and trusted with so supream a manage of His Royal concernment as he was, would have withdrawn himself from meddling in the affairs of His Sovereign, or run into a misunderstanding with any at Court, but that he could not concur in designs which he conceived tended to the ruine of these Kingdoms, and the endangering the Monarchy, as well as to the subversion of the Protestant Religion both here and elsewhere. His faithful and unwearied cares and endeavours to obviate the formidable growth of *France*, and to prevent the reestablishment of *Popery* in these Nations, and thereby the enslaving them again to *Rome*, may be thought the occasion of all the slanders which have been cast upon him, and the only true source of all the troubles he hath either conflicted with, or stood obnoxious unto. And by how much he hath been eminently instrumental to detect and defeat the many mischievous contrivances and designs of a *French* and Popish Party and Faction, by so much are all the

the Friends and Abettors of Arbitrariness and Popery at home, or such who have sold themselves for foreign Pensions to advance the Grandeur of *France*; and to contribute to the success of their conquests abroad, become his implacable and professed enemies.

And more particularly, That which gave a new ferment to Popish rage, and enflamed their indignation against this Noble Peer, was his early discovery and resentment of the *Duke of York's* being reconciled to *Rome*, and his having joyn'd himself in a close correspondence with the *French King* and his Ministers. For tho' these things are since the publishing of *Coleman's Letters* become obvious to all the world; yet this great and sagacious Minister had gotten view of, and penetrated into them long before. And the sensations as well as prospect which he thereupon had and declared of what would thence ensue to the danger of His Majesty's person, the disturbance of his Government, and the ruine of his Kingdoms and the Protestant Religion, which he is sworn to protect and defend, may be easily conjectured by the alarm which the whole Popish party immediately took, and by the bloody machinations which they entered into and cherish'd against him. And therefore even while he was *Chancellor*, and stood clothed with the supreme Authority that a Subject is capable of under His Majesty, he not only apprehended, but upon the best intelligence found himself in that danger from the Papists, that he expected every night to have his Throat cut, and accordingly kept a constant Watch in his House to prevent his being murdered and assassinated. And when they found that the taking the Seals from him (which there is reason to believe proceeded from Popish Counsels, tho' he had attain'd unto them upon as great merit, used them with as great justice, and parted with them with as great honour as ever any did) could neither find ambition nor coverousness in him to impress and work upon, so as to bring him to their Lure: They accosted him with such tenders of greatness, honour and wealth, as few Subjects would have had the humility, uprightness and self-denial to refuse: But to their shame and his glory, they found him of a nobler complexion, and a more generous and upright mind, than to abandon his principles of duty to the King, and faithfulness to his Countrey, for Riches, Honour and Power, though in conjunction with the favour of more than one Potentate. And therefore finding him above these low and pitiful temptations, and that he despised what others to the loss of their credit, and hazard of their Souls court and pursue; there was another method thought of, and a resolution taken by some great men to impeach him of Treason. And as *Colonel Conquest* in pursuance of this determination, undertook to be his Accuser, so all Offices wherein his Lordship had been concern'd, were narrowly inspected and enquired into to find just matter for a charge. And as they greatly reckon'd upon the *House of Commons* which then was, as conceiving it admirably moulded for their business, and entirely disposed to have gratified them in such a design, rather than many of them to have forfeited their Pensions at the end of the Sessions, they collected a great mass and number of particulars, which misinformation, surprise, or shortness of understanding might have betrayed the best and wisest of men into. But the King's Learned Council at Law, having seriously examined the several matters which were prepared in order to a charge against him, and preferring their Masters Honour, and the Peace of their own Consciences, before the obliging a few angry and interested men, they declared that all which with so much industry was collected and produced, was insufficient to the purpose to which the malice and revenge of some had designed it. And hereby miscarrying in their attempts upon the Life of this great and excellent person, they thereupon change the Scheme of their designs, and lay a Plot for the blasting his reputation and honour. And conceiving the *Ecclesiasticks* in a more implicate obedience to them, and that they have less honour to lose than others, they muster up, as much as they could, the whole posse of the *Clergy* to reproach and defame him. And as if it had been of more consequence to sink and eclipse the credit of this Peer, than to gain or convert Souls to God, the Pulpits instead of commending *Jesus Christ* to the Consciences of men, were employed through all parts of the Nation in blasting the Earl of *Shaftsbury*: And when none other could be found sufficiently

sufficiently qualified to revile and asperse this poor Gentleman, *Nedham*, whose Pen had been employed near Twenty years to defame His Majesty and his Father, was hired to Write false and scandalous Books against him: As if there had needed no more to bespatter this innocent person, but for that mercenary Scrib-ler to gather up the dirt which he had thrown upon Two Kings, and to cast it at him. Nor could he want impudence to brand his fellow Subject, who had accustomed himself so long in reviling his natural Princes. But all this not an- swering the ends which were expected from it, namely, the lessening him in the love and esteem of Loyal and True Protestants, an advantage is embraced of sending him to the *Tower*, upon pretence of a crime which all unbiassed men thought the freedom of Speech, which is an essential priviledg of every Mem-ber of both Houses had acquitted and justified him from.

And as this conducted nothing to make this free Generous and great minded Person to crouch and stoop to the exorbitant pleasure of those he judged Enemies to the happiness of his Majesty and the Kingdom, so the House of Lords themselves, by whom he was committed in Feb. 1678, Have since the Earl of *Danby*s coming under an Impeachment, through a sense of the in-justice and wrong which was done to this Lord and several other Peers, made an Order to Damn with an abhorrence that whole precedence. But finding that this one mans wisdom and diligence was so fatal and pernicious to all their Designs, and that many of them had been rendred abortive, and others made to redound upon themselves through his Intelligence, Care and Activity; the Papal Party have united all the Fraud and Policy which are among them, to the cruelty and rage which naturally acts men of their Religion, against sin- cere and hearty Protestant; and all for the destroying this honourable Person, and so far as we yet know, till we find the contrary proved upon a fair Tryal, a most Loyal Subject to his Majesty, as well as an useful Instrument towards the preservation of our Religion, Laws and Liberties. And for the compassing what they earnestly long for, they have, since the discovery of the Popish Plot, and the apprehension of his zeal in pursuing those that are criminals, entertained many Designs, and treated with several persons for the killing of him. And besides the many Evidences that we have of this, from the Testimonies of *Francisco de Faria*, and divers others of the Kings Evidence, *Dangerfield*, not only tells us of a design carried on by my Lady *Powis* to have him stab'd, and that several were contracted with about it; but that two or three upon her importunity, and the encouragement of a reward undertook it. And *France* assures us, that no fewer than six, viz. *Adamson*, *Proser*, *Matteson*, *Bradshaw*, *Stawley*, and *Messenger*, furnished themselves with Arms in order thereunto, and swore to accomplish it. But the holy and watchful providence of God, with the subservient Ministration of himself and those about him, having prevented them in all those desperate and malicious designs; they again shift their meth-ods and bethink themselves of a new way whereby to ruine him under the countenance of the Law which is thought to be the protection of the Inno-cent. Accordingly he was one of the first that was to be involved under the guilt of Mrs. *Celliers*, and Mr. *Dangerfields* Plot, which is commonly called the *Meal-Tub Plot*. And this being a more likely way to destroy him, than that of violence and force, seeing neither his own watchfulness, nor the attendance and assistance of his Servants can secure him against the false deposition of an indig-ent mercenary & perjur'd Rascal: there is some reason to believe that the pre- sent accusation upon which he stands committed to the *Tower*, is upon the subornation of the Papists, and as full of falsehood as malice. And tho' we will not suspect the Justice or honour of the *Board*; nor affirm that his Ma- jesty and the Council could do otherwise than they have done, seeing we are to suppose them ignorant of the Arts by which these fellows may have been prevail'd upon to swear against this noble Peer; yet forasmuch as we are to believe every man Innocent till he be found and proved Guilty, we crave li- berty to say, that we cannot think this Earl so Criminal as he is reported to be. For of all those that have opportunity to converse with him; there are none but those few Fellows; who besides their being Irish-men, are also Papists, that pre- tend

tend the having any thing to charge him with. And as it is not to be conceived, but that he should use as much freedom with English-men, especially with such as are of Quality, as with those beggarly Rascals; so it is an Infamy which his Majesty's good and Loyal Protestant English Subjects will not know how to digest; that they should be thought to conceal a Treason against their prince, when Irish Papists, and such as by their own confession have been in Plots against the Government; should have that fealty for his Majesty as to detect it. Some of those that are said to have deposed against this noble Lord, stand already Indicted for Subornation; and whether to atone for being charged with suborning on one side, they will really perjure themselves on the other, must be left to time to reveal. Others have acknowledged that they are hired to swear what they have done, and whether the credit of such men can support such a charge against a Peer of England, as the Earl of *Shaftsbury* is committed for, I leave every rational and sober man to judge. But it is not fit at present to represent all those things concerning the Witnesses, which we easily might, for that is to be reserved till his Lordship comes to his Tryal; When it is possible such matters will be detected, as will fill the minds of all men with Astonishment, and make the Authours and Abettors of these shams and subornations, the objects of his Majestys just and severe indignation. However it is with great amazement that we hear of a Peer's being sent to the Tower for Treason, without being allowed to have the Witnesses that swore against him, confronted with him and examined *ore tenus*. And why this should be denied a Nobleman, and a Protestant, when it was granted to the Papists of the meanest rank, I do not know, but I am sure it heightens the surprise. And whether the sending Letters up and down from unknown hands, and without names, to honest & Loyal persons, to lay aside their Papers, be not some argument, that all this against my Lord *Shaftsbury* is a meer Popish Intreague, and that they seek to promote the belief of a Presbyterian-Plot by little arts and tricks, I shall leave men to think as they see cause, and only subjoyn the Copy of one of the Letters. Nor will I either comment upon it at this time, nor pursue the thread of this discourse in relation to the Imprisonment of this great and noble Peer any longer, hoping to have another occasion, when this whole matter stands in a clearer light to deduce it as it ought, and make these remarks upon it, which the Service of his Majesty and my Country do require. Only it may not be unworthy of our observation, that none of all their Lordships at the Council-Board had the confidence to say, that they believed the truth of the Depositions, when my Lord of *Shaftsbury* appealed unto them in that particular, and askt whether they judged him so void of prudence as to treat with such persons about matters of so dangerous concernment?

Mr. Gibbs,

M^R Lord *Shaftsbury* being just now committed to the Tower, and Sir Tho. Playter under Examination before the King and Council, and several Warrants out against several of our dearest Friends, and now all like to be discovered; I was desired by his Lordship to give warning to his Friends; And particularly those in Wapping to secure all papers and things, &c. of which I desire you to give notice to so many as you can think, that they nor you may be surpris'd, being in more hast than ordinary, have only time to subscribe my self,

Yours in all Secrecy.

Whitehal July 2d. 1681.

J. T.

Your Name is in the List with others of your Neighbours.

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